



South Africa: Cracks in Neo-Apartheid Order



Spartacist

Demonstration by striking municipal workers in Johannesburg, September 1995.

When a handful of black students entered the all-white Laerskool Potgietersrus primary school in the Northern Transvaal in late February, they stepped across a racist color bar that had been in existence for the school's 100-year history. They were met by a mob of khaki-clad racists, and the fascist Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) denounced the court decision to allow black students to enter this school as a "sovietization of South Africa." The confrontation in South Africa's "Deep North" might seem like a flashback to the U.S. South in late 1950s and early '60s. However, while racial oppression is central to both the United States and South Africa, the two countries have fundamentally different ethnic make-ups, social structures and levels of economic

development.

South Africa is a relatively backward country where the white ruling caste—a small minority of the population—has lived well, very well indeed, through the superexploitation of black toilers in the mines, factories and farms. This was the economic bedrock of the apartheid system of legally enforced racial segregation. During the 1980s the revolt in the black townships and, even more importantly, the development of a powerful and combative black trade-union movement undermined police-state rule as the country became increasingly "ungovernable." So South African capital, encouraged and supported by its senior partners in Wall Street and London,

(continued on page 10)

For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

I.S. Hails "Strikes" by Prison Guards

Cops and Jail Guards Out of the Unions!

Recently in Ontario, Manitoba and Quebec, "unionized" prison guards have staged or threatened "strike" action over "working conditions" or funding cuts to the prison system. *These are not actions which class-conscious workers should support in any way.* Jail guards, like the cops, are a central part of the armed fist of the capitalist state. They play a repressive and reactionary role in defending and sustaining a decaying social order: they are deadly enemies of workers and the oppressed.

It was "unionized" prison screws who killed black inmate Robert Gentes in Kingston Pen in October 1994. Earlier the same year, prisoners at the Kingston Prison for Women were denied toilet paper, clean clothes and showers as guards turned off the water to sinks and toilets. This abuse, so typical of the "correctional system," sparked angry resistance. Baton-wielding male guards were called in, and videotaped cutting the clothes off female prisoners, who were strip-searched, shackled and left for twelve hours on the cold concrete floor of solitary confinement cells.

The fact that jail guards are not part of the workers movement needs special emphasis in light of the role played by 5,000 "unionized" screws during the recent Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) strike against the provincial Tory government. The picket signs carried by these professional thugs included direct appeals to their capitalist masters' racist "law and order" crusade, warning against "Young Offenders on the Loose" and proclaiming, "OPSEU Corrections Officers: Protecting Ontarians Against Rapists, Murderers." As part of their "work action," guards at Toronto's Don Jail subjected inmates to a lockdown, denying them the right



Bregg/Maclean's

During OPSEU strike, *Socialist Worker* (6 March) bragged they got "a hearing" from "unionized" guards picketing Toronto's Don Jail.

Socialist Worker

Paper of the International Socialists

Crisis in Ontario Jails

BY PHYLLIS WAUGH, OPSEU LOCAL 520

In the lead-up to the OPSEU strike, of capitalists — like the deaths at the Westray mine — go unpunished, while poor teenagers are turned into lifelong prisoners because of one break-and-promised that they would be of the colour of their

are in the best interests of the corrections workers.

Socialists have gotten a hearing for these ideas on picket lines recently, at the Don Jail and elsewhere.

We live in a society where the crime

to use the showers or phones or watch television. When prisoners staged a protest against the lockdown, the guards rushed into the jail from their picket lines to suppress it.

OPSEU president Leah Casselman of course embraces the brutally violent guards as part of the union. She's a former detention center guard herself. But tailing right behind her are the self-styled "Marxists" of the International Socialists (I.S.). In an article in the I.S.' *Socialist Worker* (6 March), Phyllis Waugh, a prominent I.S. supporter in OPSEU, hails the "militant reputation" of "correctional workers." In fact, *Socialist Worker* portrays prison guards as the vanguard of the class struggle! The I.S. even crowed that it got "a hearing" among these torturers and killers "on picket lines recently, at the Don Jail and elsewhere."

A few weeks later, *Socialist Worker* (17 April) rushed to support jail guards in Quebec who threatened strike action against a \$16 million cutback in prison funding announced by the Parti Québécois government. The PQ's pledge to reduce prison sentences and make the system more "humane" is hypocritical posturing, but the I.S.' support to a reactionary revolt by jail guards is simply grotesque.

With breathtaking doubletalk, *Socialist Worker* admits that prison guards function as one of the "oppressive arms of the state," only to assert that they "must be supported in this particular struggle against the government because a victory for the guards would be a victory for all of us." Lamenting that "we would rather have no need for prisons or prison guards," the oh-so-pragmatic I.S. declares that, "in the context of the time," it is necessary to support the screws and their crusade for higher prison spending!

The I.S.' support for agencies of capitalist repression is no aberration—in fact it's a longstanding position. A few years back, their parent organization in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), boasted that it had "a number of prison

(continued on page 14)

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Smash Tory War on Workers and Poor!

Ontario Labor Tops Knife OPSEU Strike

For five weeks in late winter, 50,000 workers from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) struck against the union-busting provincial Tory government of Mike Harris. Days before the walkout began, 120,000 unionists and their supporters demonstrated against Harris in Hamilton. At the same time, the contracts of hundreds of thousands of other public-sector unionists were about to expire with the end of the previous NDP government's anti-labor Social Contract.

What could have been the beginning of a labor counteroffensive...wasn't. Through spirited picketing and determination, the OPSEU strikers did manage to thwart the government's plan to crush the union. But the strike was isolated and then *sold out* by the union misleaders, who feared the prospect of a major labor confrontation with the capitalist state. The OPSEU brass made clear from the outset that they accepted the Tories' massive job cuts.

Then, after extracting a few face-saving changes on severance pay and bumping rights, they sent the strikers back to work. This defeat gave the Tories a green light to continue their assault on working people and the poor. Ten days later, they announced the massacre of 10,600 OPSEU jobs (13 percent of the workforce), together with another \$3 billion in spending cuts.

The betrayal of the OPSEU strike underlines the need to build a new, revolutionary and internationalist leadership of the working class. When the pro-NDP labor brass and reformist leftists say the problem is the "Tory agenda," they are *lying*. What the workers and poor are facing is not a question of a single party, or a single province or country: they are up against an entire capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. We wrote in an article last issue (*SC* No. 108, March/April) which was sold at OPSEU picket lines and rallies:

"The imperative need of Canadian capitalism to become internationally competitive drives *all* the parliamentary parties to participate in the war against working people and the poor. This—not individual traitors like Bob Rae—is why NDP governments in power in Ontario, B.C. and Saskatchewan have vied with their Tory and Liberal counterparts to slash jobs and services."

As we emphasized: "Instead of the present gang of union bureaucrats and parliamentary sellouts beholden to the bosses, we need a genuine workers party, based on the revolutionary perspective of Marxism and committed to establishing a workers government through anti-capitalist struggle."

Capitalist Onslaught and Bureaucrats' Treachery

The destruction of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, has ushered in a worldwide offensive by the capitalist rulers against those whom they exploit and oppress. The former anti-Soviet alliance of imperialist



Boris Spremo/Toronto Star

OPSEU pickets at Queen's Park legislature in Toronto.

powers has come unglued, laying bare the rivalry between various national capitalists, who aim to maximize their profits by driving down wages and destroying social programs.

The bosses' all-out austerity offensive has provoked widespread resistance. As elsewhere, the labor bureaucrats in Ontario are seeking to divert this discontent back into safe parliamentary channels. Their ultimate goal is to rekindle support for the NDP social democrats, who are still widely reviled among the union ranks for their Social Contract and other anti-working-class attacks. In response to the Harris government's rampage, the Ontario Federation of Labour brass have called a series of demonstrations and 24-hour local general strikes. Rather than being springboards for struggle, these "Days of Action" are intended as *diversions*, aimed at blowing off some steam while concrete confrontations like the OPSEU strike are undermined and betrayed.

A serious fight by the labor movement in support of OPSEU and in defense of jobs and social programs would have won active support from the hundreds of thousands who depend on the services public-sector workers provide. What was necessary was to shut government operations tight through mass pickets at key worksites, and on this basis spread the strike to other unions, including the private sector. An elected strike committee could have taken control away from the sellout labor tops, laid out a plan for struggle and prepared the workers for the inevitable showdown with the bosses' government, cops and courts.

Instead, the labor bureaucracy was able to prevent the strike action from spreading. The Power Workers Union signed a deal to avert a walkout which could have pulled the plug on the whole province. Sid Ryan, Ontario president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, kept the province's 140,000 CUPE members on the job. And the OPSEU sellout had an immediate effect. Just days later, Toronto transit workers had

(continued on page 13)

Marxism and the National Question

Part II

We print below, edited for publication, the concluding part of a presentation by Oliver Stephens of the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste Central Committee given at a Spartacist educational in San Francisco in December 1995. The first part appeared in Spartacist Canada No. 108, March/April.

* * *

As Comrade Seymour noted in the two-part *Workers Vanguard* series (Nos. 123 and 125) "The National Question in the Marxist Movement, 1848-1914":

"First, there is no Marxist program for the national question as such. The Marxist position has always had a predominantly strategic character, aimed at creating the conditions for a successful proletarian revolution. In this sense, I think that one can draw a contrast with the Marxist position on the woman question. The position in favor of abolition of the family and for the equality of women is a fundamental element of a communist society, and therefore is not subordinate to changing political conjunctures.

"The Marxist position on the national question has a much more conjunctural character historically, and is much more determined by changing empirical circumstances. Thus, it is not only legitimate, but very often obligatory, to change a specific position on a specific national question in a very short period of time."

Seymour noted that at that time (1976) we did not advocate the independence of Quebec, but should circumstances change we could change our line. In fact, after an extensive international discussion, we have done so.

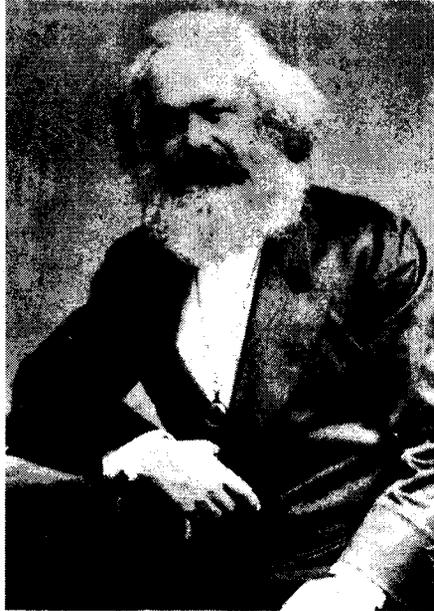
In examining any national question we have to, above all, be concrete, in place and time. Western Europe in 1848 is not identical to the tsarist Empire in 1916 which is not identical to North America in 1995.

Writing in 1930, Leon Trotsky noted that:

"Under the guise of providing an economic justification for internationalism, Stalin in reality presents a justification for national socialism. It is false that world economy is simply a sum of national parts of one and the same type. It is false that the specific features are 'merely supplementary to the general features,' like warts on a face. In reality, the national peculiarities represent an original combination of the basic features of the world process. This originality can be of decisive significance for revolutionary strategy over a span of many years."

—*The Permanent Revolution*
(Introduction to German edition)

So beware when some of our cleverer political opponents pull out a quotation from the writings of Marx or Lenin or Trotsky. Usually they have stripped away the historical context, and in many cases even the sense of the article itself. In the mid-1970s, Vancouver supporters of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat of Ernest Mandel took to screaming at us



Dietz Verlag photos

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, founders of scientific socialism and fighters for working-class emancipation.

when we argued over their capitulation to Québécois nationalism: what about Trotsky on the Ukraine, what about Trotsky on the Ukraine?

Well, what about Trotsky on the Ukraine? (For a few months in 1939, Trotsky proposed the slogan of an independent workers and peasants *Soviet* Ukraine, seeking to undercut and reverse the growth of right-wing Ukrainian nationalism while at the same time believing that the fight against national oppression could serve as a stimulus for workers political revolution in the Ukraine in advance of the Russian core of the Soviet degenerated workers state.) Was the situation he was addressing similar? Is there something methodologically important despite particular details? Actually, for the Mandelites these types of considerations mattered not a bit, because they were trying to turn Trotsky into a supporter of Ukrainian nationalism to suit their own appetites. (For more on Trotsky's highly conjunctural position and how fake Trotskyists misused it to rationalize and promote their support to counterrevolution in the USSR, see *Spartacist* No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94.)

Comrade Seymour's two-part series in *WV* is invaluable for understanding Marx and Engels' approach to the national question precisely because it situates the questions in their historical context. Comrades should certainly read these articles, but to summarize: Marx and Engels placed a heavy programmatic emphasis on creating the objective conditions which would enable the proletariat to take power. They saw as key consolidating a modern German nation state out of the miasma of 36 feudal relics (separate principalities, duchies, etc.). Why? Because only by smashing the feudal barriers could German capitalism develop on a truly national basis, and along with it the proletariat, which Marx and Engels thought would be in a position to carry out the socialist expropriation of that bourgeoisie relatively soon after.

Thus, in the period of the revolutions of 1848-49, Marx and

Engels were hardly enamored, shall we say, of the national aspirations of particularly the Slavic peoples of East Europe, with the exception of the Poles. They expected that the "ruins of peoples" would be assimilated into states grouped around the more advanced nations. But things turned out differently. The destruction of absolutism required the mobilization of the masses—but by 1848 the bourgeoisie grew deathly afraid that they too would be swept away, so they made their peace with the feudalists in the interest of preserving order—i.e., private property.

The subsequent events of European history during Marx and Engels' lifetimes revealed not just vacillation, but utter venality on the part of the bourgeoisie, as for example in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. The Prussians took advantage of French defeat to annex Alsace-Lorraine. One might suppose that the French bourgeoisie would have rallied for "national defense" and the reconquering of "our territory." But when the Parisian proletariat rose up in revolution and proclaimed the Commune, the miserable French bourgeoisie quickly abandoned "national defense" in favor of maintaining their own class rule. Thiers & Co. went so far as to invite their quite recent adversaries in the Prussian army to assist them in the destruction of the spectre of revolution. The Prussian leaders were only too happy to oblige, fearing the spread of such revolutionary contagions to Germany.

During this same period when Germany was securing its national consolidation (albeit under Bismarck!), Marx was reconsidering the reasons why the English working class had seemed so irresolute, despite the advanced nature of British capitalism and the existence of a developed proletariat, with its own organizations. He found it in the continued oppression of the Irish, and this has much relevance to the consideration of the national question in the epoch of imperialism. Marx became an advocate of Irish independence because he saw it as a way to remove an obstacle to the class struggle in England. As he wrote to Engels (10 December 1869): "*it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connection with Ireland.... The English working class will never accomplish anything before it has got rid of Ireland.... [T]he English reaction in England had its roots (as in Cromwell's time) in the subjugation of Ireland.*"

This was a recognition that the national question was beginning to have a profound effect on the course of the proletarian struggle itself. A little over a decade later Engels argued for Polish independence in order to bring the class struggle to the fore *within* Poland.

Lenin and Self-Determination

The accumulated experience of the European proletariat and the analyses of it by Marx and Engels were hardly lost on Lenin or Trotsky. What is most interesting for purposes of the national question is how Lenin approached it, since it was a key part of the success of the October Revolution. It's important to note that Lenin's thinking on the question was in the context of a large multinational empire where, first, the

"Great Russians" themselves, while being the dominant nationality, comprised a numerical minority; and second, the peoples in the border regions often had ethnic and linguistic ties to groups in other political states where the level of cultural and economic development was *higher*. But they were all under the thumb of tsarist absolutist reaction. This is quite different from the case of Austria and Germany in Marx and Engels' day, where the central power in each case was more economically advanced than the hinterlands.

The other key difference is the emergence of imperialism, i.e., the domination of finance capital over industrial capital. In a short form, the obliteration of foreign commodity producers by higher quality mass production (e.g., English textiles) was superseded by the export of capital itself. Colonies were



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Proclamation of the Paris Commune of 1871. French bourgeoisie invited Prussian army to help suppress this revolutionary uprising.

no longer simply places to extract raw materials and sell industrial products—they became places of capital investment to exploit vastly cheaper *labor* markets. And, of course, none of the imperialist bourgeoisies was about to risk such massive investments without the physical force to protect them and ensure prompt payment of the dividends. When the Mafia does it, it's called "loan sharking"; when the bourgeoisie does it, it's called "industrial development" by the World Bank.

By the turn of the century, therefore, the idea that any given nascent bourgeoisie in the colonial world could replicate the path of the French bourgeoisie of 1789 was obviously utopian. Yet these same bourgeois nationalists, who at best could only serve as pimps for one or another of the imperialists, could certainly raise a nationalist hue and cry among "their" peoples, who were then only coming out of the coma of feudalism. The great danger Lenin perceived was that national divisions in the proletariat could pose a barrier to joint struggle. Hence, the importance of the national question in tsarist Russia was *strategic* for Lenin, just as the black question is in the United States: without a correct position, and actions based on that, a proletarian revolution would be impossible.

Lenin's position on the right of nations to self-determination

(continued on page 6)

National Question...

(continued from page 5)

was squarely in the tradition of the Marxist movement of his time—the 1896 London congress of the Second International voted a resolution upholding that right. In *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* Lenin spells it out:

“If we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of nations, not by juggling with legal definitions, or ‘inventing’ abstract definitions, but by examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.... It would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state.”

This is something our various opponents almost invariably seek to muddy and mystify, lending all kinds of meanings to the right to self-determination that have nothing in common with Leninism. The 1960s New Left proclaimed “self-determination” as the general slogan for fighting against any oppression: self-determination for black people in the U.S., self-determination for women, self-determination for gays. Today there seem to be some anarchoid youth whose political wisdom appears to be summed up in “self-determination for me!”

The right of nations to self-determination simply means the right to decide whether to form a separate state, the right to secede—nothing more, but also nothing less. It is directed first of all against the chauvinism of the oppressor state, but concedes not one iota of political support to the would-be ruling class of the oppressed nation.

There was controversy on the adoption of the point on self-determination in the program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Rosa Luxemburg, in particular, objected to self-determination for Poland because it would further the aims of the Polish bourgeois nationalists and could therefore act to separate the struggles of the Polish and Russian workers against the tsarist monarchy. But G.V. Plekhanov, the founder of the first Marxist organization in Russia, had an answer for that. He noted in 1902, concerning the demand for national self-determination, that:

“If we were to forget about it or were afraid to put it forward for fear of impinging on the national prejudices of our compatriots of Great Russian origin, the battle cry of world

Social-Democracy, ‘Workers of all countries, unite!’ would be a shameful lie upon our lips.”

—cited in Lenin, “The National Programme of the R.S.D.L.P.” (1913)

Lenin further explained in 1914:

“The abandonment of this point [the right of nations to self-determination], no matter for what motives, is *actually* a ‘shameful’ concession to *Great-Russian* nationalism. But why *Great-Russian*, when it is a question of the right of *all* nations to self-determination? Because it refers to secession *from* the Great Russians. The interests of the *unity of the proletarians*, the interests of their class solidarity call for recognition of the right of *nations to secede*.”

And in the same article (“The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”) he noted:

“The question of the ‘right to self-determination’ is of course not so important to the Polish Social-Democrats as it is to the Russian. It is quite understandable that in their zeal (sometimes a little excessive, perhaps) to combat the nationalistically blinded petty bourgeoisie of Poland the Polish Social-Democrats should overdo things. No Russian Marxist has ever thought of blaming the Polish Social-Democrats for being opposed to the secession of Poland. These Social-Democrats err only when, like Rosa Luxemburg, they try to deny the necessity of including the recognition of the right to self-determination in the Programme of the *Russian* Marxists.”

Lenin *opposed* those such as the Jewish Bund who argued for notions of “cultural/national” autonomy, which they borrowed from the Austrian Social-Democrat Otto Bauer. Their autonomy meant separation of the working class by ethnic lines—separate schools, etc.—to “preserve” their national culture. This was obviously a not-so-thinly disguised capitulation to the *bourgeois* nationalists, and against this Lenin counterposed the necessary *centralization* of the proletariat and its party.

Against what is common currency in much of the left today—evinced by their political support to and tailism of the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the PLO or the IRA, et al.—Lenin put it simply in “Critical Remarks on the National Question” (1913):

“Bourgeois nationalism and proletarian internationalism—these are the two irreconcilably hostile slogans that correspond to the two great class camps throughout the capitalist world, and express the *two* policies (nay, the two world outlooks) in the national question.”

A nice summary is in his 1914 article “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”:

“In this situation, the proletariat of Russia is faced with a twofold or, rather, a two-sided task: to combat nationalism of every kind, above all, Great Russian nationalism; to recognise, not only fully equal rights for all nations in general, but also equality of rights as regards polity, i.e., the right of nations to self-determination, to secession. And at the same time, it is their task, in the interests of a successful struggle against all and every kind of nationalism among all nations, to preserve the unity of the proletarian struggle and the proletarian organisations, amalgamating these organisations into a close-knit international association, despite bourgeois strivings for national exclusiveness.

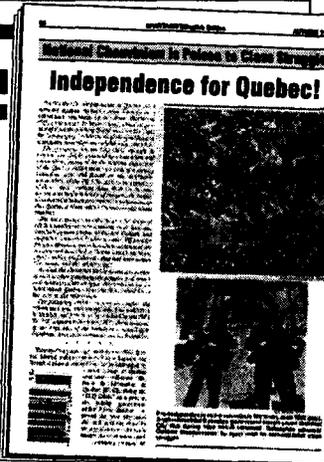
“Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations—such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers.”

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Independence for Quebec!



The fact that the Bolsheviks actively combatted Great Russian chauvinism, and maintained the right of self-determination from the beginning and particularly during the first imperialist war, was critical to the success of the October Revolution. All the other parties (Mensheviks, Social-Revolutionaries et al.) who caved in to the "liberal" bourgeoisie after the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy in February 1917 had to openly or tacitly approve the war aims of the ruling class. Under whatever disguises, they all pushed the unity of the Russian state—just as the other betrayers of the Second International were all for self-determination for the colonies of the "enemy" countries, but not those of their "own" bourgeoisie. By October 1917, only the Bolsheviks could point the way forward out of the miasma of war and national antagonisms, and only they had the party to lead a proletarian revolution.

There's something we need to be very clear on. Lenin's position on the *right* of a given nation to secede was not an advocacy that it be necessarily exercised. At several points he used the analogy of the right to divorce. One has to recognize the right (as against the champions of the sacred bourgeois family) but one doesn't demand the immediate dissolution of any and every given marriage. He saw the right to self-determination as a democratic demand—and a negative one, directed against the oppression of the tsarist autocracy.

This question came up during our discussion on Quebec. We have always unconditionally upheld Quebec's right to independence. But some comrades raised the question that if we were to go over to calling for the independence of Quebec, wouldn't this be an extension of the Leninist position? After all, Lenin didn't *call* for the independence of the Ukraine or any of the other oppressed nationalities in the tsarist empire. But one has to examine why. In absolutist tsarist Russia, national separation or the attainment of any other substantial democratic demand was inconceivable without a thoroughgoing revolution. It made eminent sense to advocate joining together in a common struggle against the common enemy. It was not a question of telling the oppressed nationalities to "wait," but of appealing to the workers and peasants to enter into revolutionary struggle under the banner of the Bolshevik party. Additionally, it was clear that an attempt to form new states in Europe would necessarily and in short order inevitably lead to a general European war. Only the most perverse could declare mass slaughter on a hitherto unknown scale as but a small price to pay for an independent Poland, for example.

Obviously, the situation in the Canadian state is markedly different. The creation of an independent, fairly minor imperialist Quebec state is clearly achievable without a revolutionary conflagration. Since the election of the Parti Québécois government, they have planned in detail all the arrangements necessary for an independent state: currency, treaties, definitions of citizenship, creation and disposition of armed forces, police, etc. There was a referendum with a huge turnout and there will be another one in the not too distant future. In the face of hysterical Anglo-chauvinist intransigence, Quebec separation might not be exactly smooth, but it is certainly more than conceivable.

There's another way of looking at the question: on what basis should the revolutionary vanguard be *precluded* from *ever* advocating the exercise of the right to self-determination in multinational states? Or as Lenin's May 1917 "Resolution on the National Question," adopted at the All-Russian Conference of the Bolsheviks, summed up:



no credit

Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, leaders of Russian Revolution and founders of Communist International.

"The right of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the advisability of secession by a given nation at a given moment. The party of the proletariat must decide the latter question quite independently in each particular case, having regard to the interests of social development as a whole and the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism."

And indeed, Lenin did not make speculations as to the future relations of the various national components of what was to become the USSR. As he wrote in 1914:

"Whether the Ukraine, for example, is destined to form an independent state is a matter that will be determined by a thousand unpredictable factors. Without attempting idle 'guesses', we firmly uphold something that is beyond doubt: the right of the Ukraine to form such a state. We respect this right; we do not uphold the privileges of Great Russians with regard to Ukrainians; we *educate* the masses in the spirit of recognition of that right, in the spirit of rejecting *state* privileges for any nation."

It is up to the people of the oppressed nation to decide. Not only do we oppose forcible subjugation, we are also opposed to forcing independence against the will of the oppressed. Puerto Rico is a case in point. A colony under the boot of U.S. imperialism, we support independence for Puerto Rico, a separate geographical, cultural, and linguistic entity from the U.S. But we are not in favor of *forcing* independence—or annexation or federation—on anyone, least of all by the racist U.S. imperialists. (See "For the Right of Independence for Puerto Rico," *Workers Vanguard* No. 588, 19 November 1993.)

Stalinist Menshevism and the Colonial Question

Lenin's last political fight was against Stalin, the Georgian turned Great Russian bully. This culminated in Lenin's demand that Stalin be removed as General Secretary, not least for his abuses against national minorities. Stalinism, with its dogma of "socialism in one country," was a nationalist rejection of Marxian internationalism. Stalin and his followers consolidated a political counterrevolution in the USSR by 1924, after which Lenin's fight was carried on by the Trotskyist Left Opposition. The petty-bourgeois bureaucratic caste was a transmission belt for the pressures, economic and

(continued on page 8)

National Question...

(continued from page 7)

ideological, of world capitalism. In 1943 Stalin dissolved the Communist International as a good will gesture to the Allies, but its revolutionary program and cadres had been destroyed long before.

As Trotsky pointed out in *The Third International After Lenin*, if you could "build socialism in one country" after a revolution, why wouldn't this anti-internationalist perspective be applicable before the revolution as well? And indeed, the various national sections of the Communist International were transformed into nationalist pressure groups upon their "own" ruling class. This was codified at the Seventh Congress in 1935 with the policy of the People's or Popular Front, where the Communist Parties explicitly took responsibility for the maintenance of the bourgeois order through these class-collaborationist coalitions.

But well before that Congress, Stalin's ascribing a progressive role to a section of the bourgeoisie had played itself out in China, where the Second Chinese Revolution of 1927 had been drowned in blood. In Russia, the Mensheviks had proclaimed that since the tasks that had to be accomplished were general bourgeois-democratic tasks, then necessarily the bourgeoisie had to take the lead and carry them out. In China, Stalin went even further along the road of submission to the bourgeoisie than the Mensheviks ever did. Not only did the Stalinists assign the Chinese bourgeoisie the role of leader of the national revolution against feudalism and imperialism, they demanded that the Chinese Communist Party place itself under the command of that bourgeoisie. The CCP was ordered to enter the Guomindang (Kuomintang, or KMT), the party of the Chinese bourgeois nationalists.

In April 1927, the Shanghai workers rose up and seized the city as the KMT's army led by Chiang Kai-shek approached. Stalin's Comintern ordered them to open the gates of the city and surrender their weapons to the KMT. They did. And in short order Chiang's army methodically massacred the vanguard elements of the Chinese proletariat. This was the result of the doctrine of "two-stage" revolution—according to which, first, the bourgeoisie must come to power in an anti-imperialist struggle, and then, sometime in the future, will come the second stage of the proletarian revolution. At bottom, the proletariat is told to support and embrace the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations.

Even before the outbreak of the first imperialist war, and three years before the February 1917 revolution, Lenin took this head on:

"Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favour, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against."

It was the experience of the defeat of the Chinese Revolution which led Trotsky to generalize the theory of permanent revolution which previously he had applied only to Russia. In brief, in the epoch of imperialism only the proletariat in power, leading the peasantry, can accomplish the tasks previously "assigned," if you will, to the bourgeoisie when it was a progressive historical force. Only the proletariat, placing itself at the head of the nation, can open the road forward. But



Fatal results of Stalin's support to "progressive" bourgeoisie: Chinese Communist executed by KMT in 1927. no credit

this can be no nationally isolated revolution. Proletarian power must be extended, especially to the imperialist centers, or it will be thrown back. As Trotsky wrote, "Only that class which has nothing to lose but its chains can conduct to the very end the war against imperialism for national emancipation" ("Revolution and War in China," 1930). In other words, only international proletarian revolution can secure national liberation. Again, as Trotsky wrote:

"The Chinese proletariat will take power not in order to resurrect the Chinese Wall and under its protection construct national socialism. By winning power the Chinese proletariat will win one of the most important strategic positions for the international revolution. The fate of China, like that of the USSR, is bound up with the fate of the revolutionary movement of the world proletariat."

— "Manifesto on China of the International Left Opposition" (1930)

Interpenetrated Peoples Today

So far, we've looked at the national question where the situation, guardedly put, has been more or less clear cut: where one national grouping has been under the heel of "foreigners," either in a multinational state or as a colony or neo-colony. But this does not exhaust the question. In many places—Ireland, Palestine, the Balkans and elsewhere—there are interpenetrated peoples. Here there are conflicting national rights of two or more peoples sharing the same territory. The creation of a national state by one must necessarily come at the expense of another. And under capitalism this is precisely what happens—witness the brutal savagery of the "ethnic cleansing" in what was Yugoslavia. The Zionists consolidated the state of Israel through mass terror and murder against the Palestinians. And in Cyprus, following the Turkish army invasion of 1974, there were forced mass population transfers that created separate Greek and Turkish sections of the island.

In these circumstances, the democratic right of self-determination becomes abstract, as it can be exercised only by the stronger national grouping driving out or destroying the weaker one. The championing of one nation's right to self-determination leads either to supporting the current oppression

of the other nation (à la the Zionists) or calling to reverse the terms of oppression. But then today's oppressed becomes tomorrow's oppressors and so on—and the cycle of irredentism and blood feuds and slaughter continues. In such cases a democratic solution is only possible by breaking the entire framework of capitalism. Only workers rule, forged through the unity of the working class, can bring about a just, democratic solution in the framework of a socialist federation.

To our opponents this is a utopian pipe-dream. They cannot conceive of forging class unity across national and ethnic divisions. But that is a statement that change is impossible, that what exists today must necessarily exist tomorrow and that, at bottom, proletarian revolution itself is impossible. But the experiences first and foremost of the Russian Revolution—and also of the Yugoslav Revolution, even though it was bureaucratically deformed from the outset—prove otherwise. It is telling that the polemics against our opponents in our "Theses on Ireland" (*Spartacist* No. 24, Autumn 1977) retain their force and power some 20 years later—without an internationalist revolutionary class perspective, these self-proclaimed leftists are hopelessly lost amidst the contending forces and the machinations of the imperialist overlords.

Self-Determination: Democratic Right

We support the right of self-determination and national liberation struggles not because there are supposedly good and bad peoples, but in order to remove the national question from the historic agenda so the question of class against class can be brought to the fore. The question of interpenetrated peoples makes clear that it is not a categorical imperative.

The right to self-determination is a democratic right—and like all such rights it is necessarily subordinated to the general interests of the proletarian revolution. For example, in 1920 the Bolshevik Red Army did not stop at the holy border of Poland in pursuing the fleeing army of Pilsudski. Lenin in particular thought the Red Army's fight in Poland would encourage an uprising of the Polish masses and lead to the establishment of a common border with Germany, which would allow direct aid to a revolutionary workers uprising in Germany. While this is not how things turned out (partially due to the treachery of Stalin who disobeyed military orders), in the sharp discussions and debates no one among the Bolshevik leadership thought that "violating Polish sovereignty" was unprincipled or out of the question. The extension, and thereby the fate, of the revolution was paramount.

In their struggle to destroy the Soviet degenerated workers state, the imperialists, the oppressors of nations and peoples around the world, demanded independence for the so-called "captive nations." Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, the German General Staff also found it convenient to proclaim their undying loyalty to the principle of national self-determination—that is, for anyone who would fight against the Red Army. Grotesquely, in the 1980s/early 90s much of the left hopped on board, with the Mandelites going so far as to hail the notorious fascist Forest Brothers (Nazi collaborators in Estonia during World War II) as models for those seeking national freedom from "Stalinist totalitarianism."



Workers Hammer

Spartacists oppose British imperialist troops in Northern Ireland on 1981 London demonstration.

Wielding the sanctity of bourgeois-democratic rights as a weapon against the dictatorship of the proletariat was nothing new. At bottom this is spun from the same cloth as Karl Kautsky's attack on the Bolshevik Revolution because the Bolsheviks were "undemocratic"—they actually dared to suppress the capitalist press and dispersed the Constituent Assembly which refused to recognize the rule of the Soviets. For us, as for Lenin and Trotsky, the decisive question in all cases is how best to advance the cause of international socialist revolution. Thus, for example, while we are for the independence of Quebec *today* we do not promise to be so always in the future, should that cut across the interests of proletarian class struggle.

By Way of A Conclusion

There's a book out called *The Language Instinct* (1994) by Steven Pinker. He presents a compelling case that language at the deepest level is an evolutionary development. Crudely, that the brains of *Homo sapiens*, that's us, are hardwired with a universal syntax that underlies all the myriad tongues spoken on this planet. This only underscores that as Marxists, those fighting for the establishment of a truly human society, we do not believe in collective guilt, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the sons or that a baby born into an ethnic, religious or national group thereby deserves or merits a death sentence.

* * *

In the months since this talk was given, the Israelis launched a murderous terror campaign against the Palestinians and other Arabs in Lebanon, Russian troops wiped out dozens of villages in Chechnya, and the bloody carve-up of the former Yugoslavia continues under direct occupation by imperialist armies. Only the internationalist program of Marxism offers a future as decaying capitalism threatens the very existence of civilization. The International Communist League is dedicated to the urgent task of building revolutionary workers parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution, the necessary instrument for the achievement of human liberation. ■

South Africa...

(continued from page 1)

moved to co-opt the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC), the historic organization of the black liberation struggle, and the closely allied reformist South African Communist Party (SACP). The result was a "power sharing" deal leading to the establishment in 1994 of a "Government of National Unity" between Nelson Mandela's ANC and the former white ruling National Party of F.W. De Klerk.

Mandela & Co. have kept their part of the deal. Due to the pressure of the ANC tops and affiliated union bureaucrats, labor time lost as a result of strikes last year was at the lowest level in almost a decade. At the same time, the social and economic degradation of the black African and coloured (mixed-race) masses continues as before. The official unemployment rate is 33 percent, *the highest level ever recorded*, and it is generally agreed that one-half of all black adults have no regular, full-time job. Bourgeois economists project that of every hundred black youth who leave school this year, *only seven* will find jobs in the so-called formal sector of the economy—government bodies, corporations or other white-owned businesses. And even blacks who have jobs are not doing any better in the "new" South Africa than they did in the old. The most recent government statistics show that black workers in the manufacturing sector earn *less than 30 percent* of the wages paid to the mainly skilled, white workers—the *same wage gap* that existed when the apartheid police state was still intact in the late 1980s!

Last September and October, more than 50,000 South African municipal workers struck against the apartheid wage structure. Strikers' marches through the streets of Johannesburg were met with tear gas and stun grenades. Militant nurses angrily denounced the ANC-led government for its claims that there was no more money for health care, carrying signs criticizing the highliving politicians on the "grave train." The nurses were betrayed by the ANC-allied Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), while some Communist Party bureaucrats branded the nurses' courageous action a "counterrevolutionary" strike. This vile smear has sparked dissent within the SACP itself.

Meanwhile, there are signs of tension between the ANC-led regime and white South African capital in the sudden collapse of the country's currency, the rand, in mid-February. Following the rand's crash, the country's 50 largest companies, represented by the South Africa Foundation, called for an economic "shock treatment" similar to that carried out in many Latin American countries and post-Soviet East Europe: sharply cutting the budget deficit, dismantling all foreign-exchange controls, speeding up the privatization of state-owned enterprises and imposing more "flexible" labor policies.

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This latter is a code word for layoffs. ANC labor minister Tito Mboweni called this program "a recipe for disaster." "The document they have delivered," he chided the Foundation, "is a request from big business to do something for them, but nothing for the poor." Since when have the masters of the Jo'burg stock exchange ever given a damn about the black poor?

In a recent survey of the South African economy, the London *Financial Times* (28 March) dismissed Mboweni's protestations as political showboating and pointed out that "the differences between government and business may be narrower than they seem on some issues, and be more about timing than direction." In the latest cabinet reshuffle, Pallo Jordan—a popular "leftist" in the Government of National Unity—was dumped as minister of telecommunications and broadcasting. A new finance minister, Trevor Manuel, has gained the plaudits of the business community. And the government is scrapping the separate ministry for the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), a centerpiece of the ANC's electoral platform which promised—but, of course, hasn't delivered—sweeping economic and social reforms.

The RDP was designed as a sop to COSATU at a time when the collaboration of the union tops was necessary to ensure "stability" under the "power sharing" regime. But today, from the government offices in Pretoria to ANC headquarters in Johannesburg's Shell House, Mandela & Co. feel less dependent on the support of the union movement. While the ANC may occasionally clash with South Africa's business leaders, this former petty-bourgeois black nationalist political movement has become a neocolonial bourgeois party. The Mandela regime—whether or not in coalition with De Klerk's National Party—*cannot* significantly improve the conditions of the black African, coloured and Indian toilers, much less meet their needs and heightened aspirations. And as we noted in "Mandela Regime Cracks Down on Black Labor" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 637, 19 January): "The Government of National Unity—ranging from black African union bureaucrats to white bankers—is bound to fracture, and when it does South Africa will be thrown into a period of violent political conflict and turmoil.... If the many-sided tensions and conflicts in South African society are not centered around a class axis, they will be fought along racial, ethnic and tribal lines."

A revolutionary workers party must be built in South Africa to struggle not only for the economic interests of the overwhelmingly black working class, but also to fight against all the many forms of social oppression in the neo-apartheid state: demolition of squatter camps in the townships and the eviction of farm laborers from the land, the deportation of "illegal" immigrants and refugees from neighboring African countries, the degradation of women by, for example, such tribal patriarchal practices as polygamy and *lobola* (bride price). South Africa conforms in an exceptionally clear way to Trotsky's conception of *permanent revolution*: national liberation, democratic rights and social and economic modernization in backward countries can be achieved only through proletarian revolution and its extension to the advanced capitalist countries of North America, West Europe and Japan.

Behind the Battle of Potgietersrus

The explosive contradictions of neo-apartheid South Africa are manifest in the sphere of education. For decades the educational system was deliberately designed to maintain the whites' monopoly on the technical and administrative skills

necessary to operate a modern industrial economy. As a result of the "Bantu education" imposed on them, today an estimated 50 percent of black adults cannot read or write. In the late 1980s, the government was spending R2,500 annually per capita on schooling for whites, R1,900 for Indians, R1,000 for coloureds and less than R500 for black Africans. And these figures understate the racial inequalities. A key part of South Africa's "public" education system are "Model C" schools which charge a compulsory tuition fee far beyond the financial capacity of almost all blacks. The RDP initially called for ten years of free compulsory education for all children in South Africa. Yet within months, the minister of education reneged on this promise, saying it would take seven or eight years before such schooling was possible.

Meanwhile, student-teacher ratios in many black areas are 80 to 1 compared to 20 to 1 at white schools. A typical school in a black township or rural area has no electricity and no windows, so children freeze in winter and cannot possibly learn under these conditions. A school library or science laboratory is literally unknown. For every 10,000 black children in South Africa's primary schools, *only one* will be eligible to enter university in science or mathematics!

At the same time, the ANC/National Party "power sharing" deal has generated a layer of black government officials, junior executives, businessmen, top union leaders, etc. who have jumped on board the "gravy train." But even these newly affluent blacks are not finding the white suburbs that comfortable or safe for them. When they try to get their children into all-white Model C schools, they encounter a potentially violent racist reaction exemplified by the Afrikaner hardliners of the Potgietersrus school board.

The black parents who finally got their children registered at the Potgietersrus school had been turned away for over a year because the administration insisted that the children must speak Afrikaans, the language derived from the Dutch settlers who colonized South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries. But in fact this school has always accepted English-speaking *white* children. When the courts ordered that the children must be admitted, school officials decided that the English-speaking (black) pupils would be physically separated, with classes to be held in a migrant workers hostel! In response, the provincial government dissolved the school governing body, and on April 3 the Constitutional Court ruled against the segregationists.

The Potgietersrus confrontation is only the tip of the iceberg of racist reaction on the educational front. In the Orange Free State, black students marched to the Trompsburg Secondary School, another all-white Model C school, but were chased away by a mob of white parents. Thirty-five black students and their parents had to threaten a sit-in at a school gate blocked by whites to get their children admitted to the previously all-white Ben Viljoen high school in Mpumalanga. In the Northern Cape, police used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse a demonstration of 500 teachers and students fighting to enter the mostly white Laerskool Warrenton.

Free, Quality Education for All!

The Afrikaner right tries to justify racial segregation in "their" schools by arguing that an influx of black students will turn these into English-speaking institutions, thereby wiping out "Afrikaner culture." To begin with, Afrikaans is hardly the exclusive property of the white descendants of the Dutch and French Huguenot settlers. It is also the native



Omar Badsha

Overcrowded and impoverished black township school in Kwazulu, 1982.

language of most of the coloured population and in many rural areas it is the first European-derived language black Africans learn. Of course, for obvious reasons black parents see education in English as the road to a better future for their children. In 1976, compulsory teaching of Afrikaans sparked the Soweto student rebellion.

English could become the dominant language in South Africa, but that remains to be seen. As Marxists, we are irreconcilably opposed to language restrictions or privileges of any sort and we stand for bilingual and, where appropriate, multilingual education. Schoolchildren in South Africa should receive instruction in Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, Urdu, Afrikaans, English or whatever languages are necessary to guarantee *free, quality education for all*.

As communists, we support the right of black children to attend any school they choose, and call for enforcing their rights by mobilizing black proletarian power. However, the struggle for black education, overcoming the legacy of apartheid as well as the present neo-apartheid conditions, cannot focus primarily on integrating the existing white school system. The sheer number of black African children dwarfs by orders of magnitude the white student population. There simply do not exist in white areas enough schools, qualified teachers, textbooks and other facilities to meet the needs of the black African masses. Furthermore, urban blacks in South Africa live in huge, segregated "townships" like Soweto and Alexandra, often located far from the nearest white areas. Even if all white schools had open admissions and no tuition fees, the millions of black township youth could not be transported to and from classes there every day.

What is needed is a fight to eliminate apartheid in the schools. This entails the massive construction of decent schools as well as providing teacher training, textbooks, modern equipment and athletic facilities for the millions of township youth, for the children in squatter camps and the "former" bantustans, and for the generation of black youth now in their twenties who never had an education. Such a program obviously requires *expropriating the wealth now monopolized*

(continued on page 12)

South Africa...

(continued from page 11)

by the white capitalist class, that is, a proletarian socialist revolution. Thus the struggle for black education is first and foremost a struggle *against* the Government of National Unity which binds the black African, coloured and Indian toilers to their exploiters through the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and the reformist SACP.

The struggle against white supremacy in education has been sharply posed not only in Afrikaner primary schools in rural towns but also at the university level. The University of the Western Cape, a traditionally black school, has been shaken by tuition protests by students. In February, students at the Afrikaans-speaking University of Stellenbosch exploded over attempts to "cut costs" by privatizing the cafeteria. Black students' expectations of quality education are being dashed as state subsidies are drastically curtailed to both technical colleges and universities. As the ANC tries to keep the lid on student turmoil nationwide, Education Minister Sibusiso Bengu haughtily lectured students on the need to "rid ourselves of this emergent culture of entitlement" (*New Nation*, 22 March). This recalls the late SACP leader and housing minister Joe Slovo ordering township residents to pay rent and utilities under the watchword of ending the "culture of non-payment."

A flashpoint for student unrest has been the elite English-speaking University of the Witwatersrand, conventionally called Wits. Under the apartheid police state Wits had a reputation as a bastion of liberalism, with university authorities managing to enroll a few black students. No doubt salving the conscience of these liberal academics, this served the plans of the sector of South Africa's capitalist rulers who saw a future need for a small black elite. With the dismantling of the apartheid laws, large numbers of black African, coloured and Indian students entered Wits and now constitute 40 percent of the student body while the faculty remains 85 percent white.

Wits has been the scene of repeated protests by black radical students and workers ever since the "power sharing" coalition took office in 1994. The campus erupted last year after a black cafeteria worker was dismissed for letting a student through the line without paying. Students stormed and occupied the registrar's office. Most recent was the dispute over a black African scholar, William Makgoba, who was appointed as a deputy vice chancellor. A professional immunologist, Makgoba had previously been head of research at London's Royal Post-Graduate Medical School. Nonetheless, some professors accused Makgoba of embellishing his credentials and of not being academically qualified for the job. Makgoba retaliated by scouring their personnel records and accusing them of cheating on their income taxes. For this, he was found guilty of violating "university ethics" and suspended from his office. These events have predictably polarized the campus, mainly along racial lines. The basic fact is that many white professors and administrators are using "academic standards" in the same way that local white school boards are using "Afrikaner culture"—as an ideological cover to preserve their control over education.

As communists, we recognize that the scientific, technical and administrative skills of the white population can be an enormously valuable resource in the socialist reconstruction of southern Africa which alone can provide a decent life for the black masses. We oppose the liberal "non-racialism" of the ANC, which in practice means upholding the privileges of the white elite, as well as the "Africanist" program of the Azanian Students Movement, which calls for removing white teachers from black schools. The logic of this reactionary black nationalist program is to drive the whites out of South Africa. We fight for a *black-centered workers government* in which there will be a place for whites who accept and respect the democratic rule of the black majority.

For Labor Mobilizations Against Racist Reaction!

The recent confrontations in Potgietersrus and other towns are part of a broader mobilization of the white, predominantly Afrikaner, right wing against the ANC, Communist Party and black workers movement. Despite Mandela's policy of "reconciliation" with the white capitalist elite, many whites are by no means reconciled to black majority rule. The resistance to school integration has been orchestrated by a united front of the white right—the National Party, Conservative Party, Freedom Front and the openly fascist AWB—which has intimate ties to the white officer corps and senior police commanders at the core of South Africa's state apparatus. Many of these reactionaries call for a "volkstaat," i.e., a separate Afrikaner statelet.

At the same time, many poor whites—mostly Afrikaners—feel that they have been sold out by their leaders and fear that their privileged position relative to the black masses will be eliminated. This is fertile recruiting ground for fascist/racist forces, but a multiracial communist vanguard could also win many of this layer by appealing to them on a *class* basis, in opposition to the Anglo/Afrikaner masters of industry. In recent years some white railway and other workers have joined COSATU, seeking to defend their economic interests within the framework of the predominantly black union movement. A Bolshevik workers party would seek to build on such developments.

The current situation cries out for action by the labor movement to spike racist attempts to block integration of the

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schools. The trade unions have the social power to clear school gates of racist mobs. Some black workers may see the fight over school integration as of concern only for newly affluent blacks who have moved into the white suburbs. While understandable, this view is narrow and shortsighted. Every instance of racial discrimination must be fought. Moreover, if fascist thugs can intimidate black students from entering white schools today, they will be encouraged to break strikes and bust up demonstrations of black workers tomorrow. COSATU union bureaucrats have not mobilized their ranks in defense of black schoolchildren because they do not want to disturb the fragile social order of the neo-apartheid arrangement of which they are a key component. Thus the fight against apartheid in the schools is necessarily a fight to split the "tripartite alliance," the nationalist popular front which ties the powerful and combative black union movement to the bourgeois nationalists of the ANC through the reformist Communist Party.

Various smaller, self-proclaimed socialist groups have followed in the wake of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance, seeking to gently push the Mandela government to the left through various pressure campaigns. The Socialist Workers Organisation (SWO), linked to the British SWP of Tony Cliff and the Canadian International Socialists, voted for the bourgeois-nationalist ANC in the 1994 elections and called in last year's local elections to "Vote ANC to Boot De Klerk." During non-election periods, the SWO says: "ANC Should Make the Rich Pay for the RDP" (*Socialist Worker*, 16 August 1995). This only builds illusions in the bourgeois-nationalist rulers who embraced De Klerk and are in fact ditching their own hollow "Reconstruction and Development Program" to make the impoverished black masses fill the coffers of the capitalists.

The Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA)

ran a "Workers List Party" (WLP) together with the International Socialist Movement in the '94 elections. The International Communist League gave critical support to the WLP candidates, noting that the WLP drew a crude class line but failed to explicitly counterpose itself to the ANC and that its Manifesto was "a standard reformist laundry list of demands." An earlier WOSA pamphlet on "The Education Crisis" called for "an anti-racist, anti-sexist, democratic system of education in a democratic South Africa/Azania." The occasional "anti-capitalist" rhetoric notwithstanding, this is a program for a bourgeois-"democratic" South Africa. And the WLP's call "For Right to Work to Be Written into Any New Constitution" only misleads workers into thinking there can be full employment under capitalism.

What is needed is a *Bolshevik workers party* capable of leading the workers movement in a socialist revolution in South Africa and extending the revolution internationally, which alone offers a progressive solution to all of the national and democratic tasks. Given the country's massive and stark inequalities, so long as the struggle over the redistribution of the country's wealth is defined in national-ethnic terms and limited to a purely South African framework, it could well trigger race war, bloody tribalist conflict and economic collapse. The fight for a black-centered workers government would necessarily transcend the potentially fratricidal conflicts between different ethnic groups, holding out the prospect of decent jobs, education and housing for all working people—black, coloured, Indian and white—on the basis of socialist planning. Only a *proletarian internationalist* perspective, linking the reconstruction of southern Africa to a world socialist revolution, can ensure that a just and egalitarian society will be erected on the ruins of the neo-apartheid state.

—Adapted from *Workers Vanguard No. 643, 12 April*

OPSEU...

(continued from page 3)

a giveback contract stuffed down their throats. In the private sector, the Steelworkers' powerful Local 1005 at Stelco, the largest steel producer in the country, signed off on a six-year deal.

Following in the wake of the die-on-your-knees union brass and New Democrats are a host of self-styled socialist outfits—the International Socialists, Communist Party, Labour Militant et al. A year ago, these groups called on workers to re-elect the traitorous NDP government. Now they echo the bureaucrats' lying claim that the OPSEU strike ended in success. According to the I.S.'s *Socialist Worker* (3 April), the outcome of the strike was cause for "celebration" because the Tories "have had their noses bloodied." And the CP's *People's Voice* (May 1996) declares that "OPSEU scored a victory" by forcing the Tories to negotiate.

Deferring to the labor misleaders, the most the various fake-left groups demand is more militancy on an economic level. The maximum program of the I.S., Labour Militant & Co. is a call on the OFL tops to organize a province-wide general strike. A general strike necessarily poses the question of political power—which class shall rule, the capitalists or the workers. The fake-lefts' answer is another NDP government—which amounts to a call to maintain capitalism. Thus their pressure tactics add up to nothing more than a pseudo-

militant cover for labor tops and New Democrats.

So long as the workers remain trapped within the perspective of capitalism and the narrow framework of reformist trade unionism, they cannot break the chains of their oppression. Even struggles around wages and working conditions will be fatally undermined if the working class remains divided against itself through racism, anti-gay and anti-woman bigotry and anti-Quebec chauvinism. These are the poison-tipped weapons of Mike Harris and the ruling class he represents. These same poisons are fed to working people by the labor bureaucrats and social democrats, whose job it is to keep every struggle within bounds acceptable to the profiteers. Thus the NDP has been in the *forefront* of the hysteria against the prospect of Quebec independence. Buy into that, and working people cannot win.

We need a *revolutionary workers party*. While giving leadership to today's defensive struggles, such a party would go beyond narrow trade unionism to take up the cause of all the oppressed: denouncing Anglo-chauvinism and advocating independence for Quebec; championing full citizenship rights for immigrants and refugees; defending women and gays against "family values" reaction. Bankrupt capitalism cannot be reformed—it must be overthrown. It will take a fight for workers revolution—in Canada, south to the U.S. and Mexico and throughout the world—to put an end once and for all to capitalist poverty and oppression and usher in a socialist future for humanity. ■

International Support for Brazil Union

An urgent appeal for international labor solidarity was issued in March by Luta Metalúrgica (LM—Metal Workers Struggle) in the Brazilian industrial center of Volta Redonda, near Rio de Janeiro. The call protested the sinister invasion of a March 13 meeting of the Municipal Workers Union by the notorious Military Police (see *Workers Vanguard* No. 642, 29 March). This assault by police armed with pistols and shot-guns is a deadly threat to the entire labor movement.

In 1988, the army massacred striking workers in Volta Redonda who were occupying Latin America's largest steel plant. The massacre of landless peasants by the Military Police and army in the state of Rondônia last August; the systematic murder of black street children by these same police and the municipal guardas in the state of Rio de Janeiro; the "disappearance" of black trade unionist Joel Rufino—these show the real face of "democracy" in Brazil.

From Australia to France and Britain, there has been an outpouring of international support by trade unions, human rights organizations and individuals in response to LM's call. The leadership of the Municipal Workers published a four-page supplement of its newspaper *Gestão Municipários em Luta* featuring an article by U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Police: Part of, or Enemies of, Labor?"

From Canada, the Toronto and Vancouver locals of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers sent protests. So too did CUPE Local 391 in Vancouver. In the U.S., Leroy Collier, President of Branch 2200 of the National Association of Letter Carriers in Pasadena, wrote: "Worker unions belong to the workers; the military police and the military arm of the government have no place in these organizations!"

From Japan came a declaration from the Minato Godo

Municipal Workers Union militants' newspaper carried protests against invasion of union meeting by Military Police. Front page featured article by U.S. death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.



local, a member of the National Metal Machinery Workers Union. In South Africa, statements were received from the Turning Wheel Workers Union, and from the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action. And from Mexico City, Esteban Volkov, grandson of Leon Trotsky, wrote:

"I join my voice to the energetic protests against police and military interference in the legitimate trade-union assemblies and struggles of labor sectors in Volta Redonda, Brazil. This interference violates the most elementary workers' rights under any regime which claims to respect human rights, and belongs to the sinister pages of fascism. The working-class sector, creator of the wealth, must have the full right to carry out its union life without intimidation and repression by the state apparatus."

Down with the dangerous police provocations against union militants in Volta Redonda! Police hands off the unions! ■

Cops and Jail Guards...

(continued from page 2)

officers who were in sympathy with our objectives" (*Socialist Worker* [Britain], 26 June 1993). And the American International Socialist Organization (ISO) recently supported a "strike" by security guards in New York City. Only a month before, these same security guards had acted as strikebreakers for the real-estate bosses against a walkout by building maintenance workers.

Like the official police, private security outfits and company cops are part of the capitalists' arsenal of repression, whether they're checking lunchboxes at the plant gate, rousting minority youth from shopping malls or laying a beating on transients (the stock in trade of every railway cop). They have *no place* in the trade unions. Yet today in Canada, unions like the Steelworkers and Teamsters are massively recruiting security guards to boost their dues base!

The International Socialists wouldn't know the class line if they fell over it. During the New York building workers strike, their ISO co-thinkers were one of several pseudo-socialist outfits that blithely waltzed across the picket lines, even holding meetings inside struck buildings (see "Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross!" *Workers Vanguard* No. 638, 2 February). At bottom, the I.S. are social democrats who share the political outlook of their big brothers in the NDP. The union bureaucrats, New Democrats and their "left" tails fos-

ter the dangerous illusion that the capitalist state can be "reformed" or "controlled" to serve the interests of workers and the oppressed. In the early 1930s, the German Social Democrats disarmed the proletariat by preaching reliance on the Prussian police to stop Hitler's Nazis. These cops had largely been recruited from among socialist workers after World War I. But as revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky warned, "The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker" (*What Next?*, January 1932).

Police "militancy" and cop/jail guard "strikes" over pay and "working conditions" inevitably have a bonapartist thrust, reinforcing these thugs' view that they are a law unto themselves. In an earlier polemic against the British SWP and Militant Labour group (who also argue that the cops are "workers in uniform"), we wrote: "Better 'working conditions' for cops means fewer restrictions on their ability to brutalize minorities, attack picket lines and carry out provocations against leftists" (Spartacist Pamphlet, *Militant Labour's Touching Faith in the Capitalist State* [1994]).

The interests of the working class cannot be defended by those who invite its worst enemies to infiltrate labor's ranks. We Trotskyists fight to build a revolutionary vanguard party which, like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, understands that the capitalist apparatus of repression and terror cannot be reformed but must be swept away through workers revolution. ■

Partition Threat...

(continued from page 16)

Quebec Liberal Party had to denounce them, joining a *unanimous* vote in the National Assembly against Ottawa's ravings. But they have breathed life into the wild array of Anglo-chauvinist grouplets in Quebec, outfits like the Quebec Political Action Committee and the Quebec Committee for Canada. With their inflammatory rhetoric and crazy-quilt maps showing where an independent Quebec is to be partitioned (on the lines of majority language or even local voting results in a referendum), they hope to whip up a reactionary frenzy to "save Canada."

Not surprisingly, these types were among those who organized the "unity" rally in Montreal a few days before the October referendum. That sudden outburst of "love" fooled very few francophones. When they see a crowd of drunken Ontarians on the streets of Montreal, they usually know from experience that little love is involved. So too on the political plane—all the mealy-mouthed calls to recognize Quebec as a "distinct society," or the "*foyer principal*" ("hearth and home") of French culture in North America, are rightly seen as condescending sops.

In their drive to maintain their lordship over the Québécois, the racist Canadian rulers are cynically posturing as the "defenders" of minority rights for anglophones, immigrants and Native people. Having denied the language rights of French-speakers outside Quebec for generations, they now play on the insecurities of English-speakers in Quebec. We Marxists say: No privileges for any language—Equal language rights for all, everywhere! And against the racist anti-immigrant and anti-refugee hysteria whipped up by Ottawa and by Quebec's would-be new rulers, we call for full citizenship rights for *all* immigrants.

It is the Native peoples of northern Quebec who are most caught in the nationalist crossfire. With breathtaking hypocrisy, the federal government—creators of the reservation system, residential schools and the dehumanizing Indian Act—now pose as champions of aboriginal rights. At the same time, Quebec's bourgeois nationalists have made clear their intent to keep "their" Native people, including in areas that have never been part of the historic territory of the French-speaking population. Against all the nationalist racists, in areas where Native people are the concentrated population we assert their right to the fullest possible regional autonomy. Within the framework of capitalist rule, however, the "choice" of being part of an independent Quebec or a rump Canada is a "choice" of which ruling class will viciously oppress and brutalize the Native peoples. The working class in both English Canada and Quebec must mobilize in defense of Native rights, part of a fight for an egalitarian socialist society which can alone redress the deepgoing oppression of the aboriginal peoples.

In English Canada, the social democrats of the NDP have long been in the forefront of the chauvinist "unity" brigade. While hacking away at social programs and workers' rights from their provincial government benches, over Quebec the NDP sings from the Reform hymnal. Most recently, B.C. NDP premier Glen Clark joined the hue and cry against "privileges" for Quebec. The slavishly pro-capitalist NDP hopes to use the Maple Leaf to dupe English Canadian workers, making it easier for the bosses to cut their throats.

Meanwhile, every instance of Anglo intransigence pushes the Quebec working class ever deeper into the nationalist trap

set by the labor-hating Parti Québécois. New premier Lucien Bouchard managed to get a "national consensus" in favor of steep cuts in social programs through his "socio-economic conference" last March, as the Quebec labor tops agreed to a law mandating a "zero deficit" by the year 2000. Not coincidentally, this occurred in the midst of the chauvinist barrage from Ottawa, which was used by the Quebec union bureaucrats to justify getting into bed with the (federalist) Quebec Employers Council and other viciously anti-union forces.

The national oppression of Quebec has meant low wages and the highest unemployment rate in Canada outside Newfoundland. But the once-militant Quebec working class has been muzzled and hog-tied for the bosses by the pro-PQ union tops. Endemic poverty and joblessness remain, hitting women and (often English-speaking) immigrants the hardest. Chained to the cart of nationalism, the workers have been made to pay the price for well over a decade of capitalist economic downturn—including plenty of blackmail from big corporations opposed to independence—together with sweeping government attacks on the unions, welfare and health care.

Canada is made up of two nations, one oppressing the other. It is clear, and has been for some time, that the French-speaking Québécois population wants out. Far from moving toward assimilation into the dominant English-speaking nation in North America, the Québécois have developed their own class-divided society, with a bourgeoisie which has increasingly consolidated its own separate political economy. The utterly anomalous situation where Canada is split on national lines while Quebec has not yet separated produces deep nationalist animosity, poisoning the prospects for united working-class struggle against a common capitalist enemy.

Various self-proclaimed socialist groups (Communist Party, International Socialists, "Bolshevik Tendency") line up behind the NDP and its Anglo-chauvinist capitalist masters in opposition to independence for Quebec. Others (Gauche Socialiste/Socialist Challenge) march in step with the nationalists in Quebec. Still others (Action Socialiste and other Quebec Maoists), who claim to oppose bourgeois nationalism, deny the simple *fact* that Quebec is an oppressed nation. We Trotskyists, revolutionary internationalists, advocate independence for Quebec in order to get the national question "off the agenda," particularly to combat the orgy of chauvinism in English Canada but also to foil the aims of the bourgeois nationalists in Quebec who seek to tie the historically combative Québécois proletariat to their coattails.

As opposed to the bourgeois-nationalist infatuation with the sacred soil of the "motherland/*patrie*," for Marxist internationalists borders are not sacrosanct. But make no mistake, the current talk about the "partition" of Quebec is an open threat of *violence* against the democratic right of the Québécois to self-determination. Workers in English Canada must fight against the continued subjugation of Quebec, which poisons class struggle and provides a convenient scapegoat for the pro-capitalist union misleaders and social democrats. Independence for Quebec would clear the road for redirecting the struggles of working people against their "own" bosses and lay the genuine basis for common class struggle across the national divide in the future. Against anti-Quebec bigotry in English Canada and nationalism in Quebec, the workers must combat every instance of oppression—racism, male chauvinism, anti-gay prejudice—as part of a fight for socialist revolution. Down with national chauvinism! For Quebec independence! ■

Ottawa Threatens Partition of Quebec



Chrétien's ravings against Quebec's right to secede stoke fires of reaction. Down with Anglo-chauvinist scare campaign!

Christopher Morris

For Quebec Independence!

Having sent the army into Quebec in 1970, eight years later prime minister Pierre Trudeau threatened to once again "use the sword" to suppress agitation for Quebec independence. Today Jean Chrétien, once Trudeau's lieutenant, is following in his mentor's footsteps, ominously declaring that if Canada is divisible, so is Quebec. Once the purview of obscure Anglo groups on the West Island of Montreal, the idea of splitting Quebec apart along linguistic lines in the event of secession has now been picked up at the very top of the federal government. Among other things, the Anglo chauvinists propose turning Montreal, the economic and cultural center of Quebec and the most cosmopolitan city in Canada, into a North American version of Belfast or Jerusalem. We Marxists say: Down with the Anglo-chauvinist campaign! Independence for Quebec!

Having prevailed in last year's referendum by the slimmest of margins, Canada's rulers are now floating their "Plan B"—an ultra-hard line against separation, complete with dire warnings of armed intervention to retain control over vast areas of the province if Quebec does move to secede. Ottawa's threats are aimed at scaring the Québécois into accepting continued Anglo domination. Echoing Preston Manning's Reform Party yahoos, Chrétien declared that he might not "accept" a simple majority vote for separation. Meanwhile, at an April 8

news conference with his Russian counterpart Yevgeny Primakov, Liberal foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy endorsed Russia's bloody war against the Chechens, not so covertly drawing a parallel between Quebec and Chechnya.

Now the government has joined in a private legal suit brought by *indépendantiste*-turned-federalist Guy Bertrand which seeks to declare any Quebec referendum on secession illegal. And in response to Reform Party cries of "sedition," the Liberals are conducting a parliamentary witchhunt of Bloc Québécois MP Jean-Marc Jacob for issuing a press release last October calling on Québécois members of the Canadian Armed Forces to join a new Quebec army in the event of a Yes vote for independence.

Chrétien turned his "tough talk" into action on February 15 in Hull, as he physically assaulted pro-independence, anglophone demonstrator Bill Clennett. A wild-eyed Sheila Copps, then deputy prime minister, took to the airwaves in English Canada to praise her boss for throttling a "separatist disguised as an unemployed protester." (Meanwhile heritage minister Marcel Massé tried to convince the Québécois that the images on TV "do not reflect reality.") Chrétien's message was clear enough—supporters of Quebec independence are dangerous, and anything can be done to them.

The talk of "partition" and threats to abrogate Quebec's national rights are so demented that even the federalist

(continued on page 15)